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Letter dated 21 February 2003 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the assessment of the work of the Security Council during the presidency of France (January 2003) (see annex). This assessment was prepared under my responsibility, following consultations with the other members of the Council.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Jean-Marc **de la Sablière**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 21 February 2003 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English and French]

Assessment of the work of the Security Council during the presidency of France (January 2003)

Introduction

Under the presidency of France, the Security Council completed a busy programme in January 2003. The Iraqi issue was of most concern to the member States, with three meetings in the presence of the representatives of UNMOVIC and IAEA, including a public briefing.

The open meeting organized on 20 January on combating terrorism gathered 13 Foreign Ministers and allowed the adoption of a common declaration aiming at reinforcing the international community's mobilization against this scourge.

The Council focused a large part of its work on Africa, holding seven consultation meetings on African issues, including Côte d'Ivoire, which were all followed by statements of the President to the press.

Three peacekeeping operation mandates expired during the month and were renewed.

A public debate was held on the report of the Secretary-General concerning children in armed conflict and was followed by the adoption of a resolution. In addition, the sanctions against Al-Qa'idah were renewed and the Council agreed on the composition of the sanctions committees for the year 2003.

During the month of January, the Security Council adopted nine resolutions and the President was authorized to deliver nine statements to the press (see appendix).

The members of the Council held 17 public meetings, including 3 with troop-contributing countries, and met in informal consultations on 20 occasions.

The French presidency tried to enhance the transparency of the Council's work by holding briefings for the States non-members of the Council after informal consultations. The programme of work, the press statements and a summary of the Council's meetings were posted on the presidency's web site and updated daily.

Africa

Ethiopia and Eritrea

During informal consultations on 7 January, the members of the Council heard a briefing by the Secretariat on the report dated 20 December 2002 concerning Ethiopia and Eritrea.

The situation in the Temporary Security Zone remained relatively calm, despite a series of cross-border incidents in the Central Sector in September and October.

After a hiatus several months, the Military Coordination Commission met on 11 December, in Nairobi, under the chairmanship of Major General Robert Gordon, the new Force Commander, to discuss the modalities of demining operations in support of the demarcation process.

The humanitarian situation remained serious because of the drought, which has resulted in migration of people on both sides of the border. Assistance from the international community is needed.

A positive development was the release by Ethiopia of the remaining Eritrean detainees, which contributes to the normalization of relations between the two countries.

The peace process has now entered the crucial phase of demarcation. The Secretary-General encourages the parties to engage in discussions with his Special Representative, Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, to resolve the problems relating to the transfer of territorial control. Contributions to the Trust Fund for the delimitation of the border will be necessary to allow the continuation of the demarcation process.

The Secretariat gave the following details on recent events. On 18 December, an Ethiopian villager was fatally shot in the Central Sector inside the Temporary Security Zone. On 22 December, UNMEE chaired a meeting between military representatives of the two parties at Zalambessa to investigate this tragic incident. This meeting allowed the two delegations to engage in a positive discussion to prevent similar occurrences in the future. In recent weeks, Ethiopian villagers and their livestock have been entering the Temporary Security Zone without incident and refused to leave the Central Sector. UNMEE is working hard to keep the situation calm on the ground. On 31 December 2002, Ethiopia announced that it would close its embassy in Asmara. The Secretary-General announced that he had decided to appoint Angela Kane as his Deputy Special Representative in Asmara.

The members of the Security Council welcomed the progress made and the schedule announced for demarcation of the border. They encouraged the parties to engage in discussions with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to address any issues that might arise during this process. Members of the Council called on both parties to resolve all other outstanding issues, including the establishment of a direct high-altitude air corridor between the two capitals. They expressed concern about the shortfall in the Trust Fund and called on the international community to contribute urgently to its funding. Preoccupied by the looming drought in the two countries, they supported the appeal by the Secretary-General to Member States to provide generous support for ongoing humanitarian operations in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

A statement to the press was delivered by the President following the consultations (see appendix).

As decided in consultations, the President of the Council had a meeting with the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to ask him to explain the closing of the Embassy in Asmara and express the concern of the Council in that regard.

Central African Republic

During informal consultations on 8 January, the Representative of the Secretary-General in the Central African Republic briefed members of the Council on the sixth report of the Secretary-General on the situation in that country. The Secretariat reported that a special session of the follow-up Committee to the Meeting of Political Parties was held in Bangui on 9 and 10 December 2002, as a prelude to the national dialogue announced by President Patassé. However, tensions still persist in the relations between the majority and the opposition. A coordinator and a deputy coordinator were appointed on 28 December 2002 to initiate the national dialogue.

Following the decision of States members of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) at the Libreville summit in October 2002 to deploy an observation force, the Gabonese contingent was deployed on 8 December 2002. The other components of the force are due to arrive in Bangui around 20 January. Forces of the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States all left the Central African Republic in December. However, a real armed rebellion (supporters of Bozizé) still operates in the northern and eastern parts of the country. BONUCA continues its military observation missions and collection of arms.

Social tension has been persistent since last September, despite efforts by the Government to pay the salaries in arrears. The economic situation is still worrying. The three-year cooperation programme with IMF has not been finalized.

The human rights situation is also worrying, especially because of the violent acts and lootings committed during October and November 2002 on innocent civilians, by Jean-Pierre Bemba's men and the rebels. The Human Rights Section of BONUCA does its best to provide judicial assistance to the victims and will open a second regional office this year.

Relations between the Central African Republic and Chad are improving and a meeting of the Joint Commission should be held in Libreville in the very near future.

The members of the Council noted with satisfaction President Patassé's appeal for a national dialogue and the recent establishment of the national dialogue coordination committee. This dialogue should be comprehensive and all-inclusive. They welcomed the deployment of the CEMAC force under the leadership of Gabon and noted with satisfaction the commitment made by Chad and the Central African Republic to implement fully and without delay the provisions of the Libreville agreement. They expressed the wish that the decision of the two parties to convene the Joint Commission be rapidly implemented.

The members of the Council also expressed their concern regarding the human rights situation in the Central African Republic and called upon the donor community to consider with solicitude the exceptional situation the Central African Republic is facing.

At the end of the consultations, the President expressed the views of Council members to the press (see appendix).

Sierra Leone

On 10 January, the Secretariat briefed Council members on the sixteenth report of the Secretary-General on UNAMSIL and the recent developments in Sierra Leone: implementation of the drawdown plan has started according to the provisions of resolution 1436 (2002). A total of 1,600 troops have been withdrawn since last October. The Mission's troop level stands at 15,800, to be reduced to 13,000 by the end of May 2003.

Deployment of the 170 United Nations civilian police personnel who will participate in the training of the Sierra Leone police has started; 85 should be deployed for the time being. In order to achieve its target of recruiting 1,000 new cadets each year, the police force will conduct a recruitment exercise throughout the year. Current training activities are focusing on 450 already recruited candidates. The limited capacity of the police training school remains a major constraint, because it can only accommodate 200 cadets per intake.

Consolidation of peace and stability remains a major task, notably the reintegration of former combatants into civilian society by the end of 2003.

Efforts need to be stepped up in the areas of extending the court system throughout the country. Government control of diamond mining is also still not sufficiently effective. The Special Court is now operational and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has made progress in its work. There have been achievements in the humanitarian situation, with the resettlement of internally displaced persons. The question of the refugees is still a challenge.

Maintaining a stable security environment remains pivotal to the success of both the restructuring of UNAMSIL and the efforts to consolidate peace and accelerate national reconstruction in Sierra Leone. The conflict in Liberia remains a worrying security factor, as well as the present crisis in Côte d'Ivoire.

The Council members welcomed the progress made by UNAMSIL in its restructuring. They noted with concern the fact that government control was not yet fully re-established in some areas of the country. They expressed concern about the regional security situation and reiterated the importance of a political dialogue among Mano River Union countries.

A press statement was issued at the end of the consultations (see appendix).

Democratic Republic of the Congo

During informal consultations on 15 January, members of the Security Council heard a briefing by the Secretariat on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since the conclusion of the Pretoria Agreement on 17 December 2002. With regard to the internal political situation, the facilitator is currently conducting consultations to organize a plenary session of the inter-Congolese dialogue that will have to formally adopt the Agreement of 17 December 2002. Questions are still pending, especially security in Kinshasa during the transitional period and the finalizing of the draft Constitution.

As far as the military situation is concerned, the Gbadolite Agreement signed on 30 December 2002, which makes provision for a truce in the Ituri region, is starting to be implemented but the withdrawal of the troops, especially those of MLC and RCD-N, has not yet been completed and must be pursued.

The humanitarian situation is also very worrying: a MONUC multidisciplinary team has confirmed that human rights violations were perpetrated during the incursions in Ituri: rapes, looting, killings and other violent acts could have been committed in a premeditated way by MLC and RCD-N, resulting in the displacement of 110,000 persons.

Last December, MONUC opened the first centre for disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration and is currently consulting various Congolese and Rwandan parties to further implement that programme.

If the Pretoria Agreement is implemented and the transitional institutions are set up, the United Nations should then consider a unified and integrated approach.

The members of the Council unanimously condemned the violations of human rights and other exactions committed by MLC and RCD in the Ituri region. They demanded that MLC ensure that the massacres and violations of human rights cease immediately and that it hold the perpetrators accountable. They took note of the fact that Mr. Bemba had committed himself to take action and expressed their intention to continue to monitor the situation in this regard, on the basis of continuing investigations by MONUC and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The members of the Council stressed in particular the need for all parties claiming a role in the future of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to demonstrate their respect for human rights, international humanitarian law, and the security and well-being of civilian populations in areas under their control.

At the end of the consultations, the President made a statement to the press (see appendix).

On 24 January, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 1457 (2003), by which it renewed for six months the mandate of the Panel of Experts headed by Mahmoud Kassem and strongly condemned the illegal exploitation of the natural resources of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Liberia

The Secretariat briefed the Council members, in informal consultations on 17 January, after they had received the Secretary-General's letter of 15 January 2003 concerning the revised mandate of the United Nations Office in Liberia (UNOL).

The Director of the Africa II Division of the Department of Political Affairs indicated that consultations were still ongoing between the United Nations and the Government of Liberia with a view to arriving at an early agreement on the mandate. But so far, the Government of Liberia had not responded to the request by the Secretariat.

With regard to the security situation, the Secretariat reported continued and intense fighting between Government forces and LURD dissidents, in Lofa County, in the north and north-west of Liberia. The rebels were reported to have attacked the town of Bopulu and to be 50 km from the capital.

Meanwhile, freelance mercenaries were reported to be joining the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire. The humanitarian situation is worsening as a result of the continued fighting. Over 200,000 Liberians have sought refuge in neighbouring countries, notably in Sierra Leone and Guinea, adding to the estimated 180,000 internally

displaced persons. Meanwhile, the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire has resulted in large-scale population movements into Liberia.

The human rights situation is worrisome, since journalists, human rights activists and opposition political party members are in custody, on a variety of charges.

On the issue of the legislative elections scheduled for 14 October 2003, the Electoral Commission of Liberia hinted that exiled politicians could be barred from participation. In a letter dated 16 December 2002, President Taylor requested United Nations technical assistance to facilitate the electoral process; but the Secretariat is not in a position to respond to this request as long as the UNOL mandate is not revised.

The International Contact Group, which held its first working session at ministerial level on 19 December 2002 in Dakar, will meet again in New York at Permanent Representative level in February. The Secretariat is of the view that the Group provides the opportunity for the international community to constructively engage in Liberia and to find a comprehensive solution to the country's crisis.

The members of the Council expressed regret that the Government of Liberia did not respond to the proposals of the Secretary-General for a revised mandate for UNOL and strongly urged it to do so quickly. They also called on the Government of Liberia to create the conditions for free, fair and transparent elections and to commit itself to building peace in the region.

They requested the Secretariat to keep them informed regularly on developments in the situation in Liberia.

At the end of the consultations, the President conveyed the views of Council members to the press (see appendix).

On 28 January, the Security Council adopted resolution 1458 (2003), by which it re-established the Panel of Experts for a period of three months.

Western Sahara

During informal consultations on 23 January, the members of the Council heard a briefing by the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Hédi Annabi, on the report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara. The Assistant Secretary-General provided information on the recent mission of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, James Baker III: he visited the region from 14 to 17 January 2003 and met King Mohammed VI of Morocco, the President of Algeria, the Secretary-General of the Frente POLISARIO and the President of Mauritania. He presented to them a proposal for a political solution which provides for self-determination, according to the provisions of resolution 1429 (2002), and requested the parties to study it carefully. The Secretariat therefore requested a technical rollover of the mandate of MINURSO for a period of two months, in order to allow the parties to study that proposal, and would report later to the Council.

The Assistant Secretary-General stated that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, William Lacy Swing, and UNHCR held consultations with the parties regarding the implementation of confidence-building measures concerning the refugees and visits of separated Saharan families; but it had not been possible to

reach an agreement on the selection of the participants for the exchanges of family visits.

The members of the Council discussed the draft resolution extending the mandate of MINURSO without agreeing on the period (two or three months). They supported the efforts of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General to find a political solution to the long-standing dispute in Western Sahara.

They called upon Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO to continue to cooperate with the efforts of ICRC to resolve the problem of the fate of persons unaccounted for since the beginning of the conflict.

The members of the Council expressed concern that confidence-building measures remained stalled and called on the parties to make the necessary compromises to allow person-to-person contact between Saharans on both sides of the berm.

At the end of the consultations, the President expressed the views of Council members to the press (see appendix).

Following expert meetings, agreement was reached on renewing the mandate of MINURSO for two months until 31 March 2003 to give the parties time to consider the proposal presented to them by the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General. Resolution 1463 (2003), adopted on 30 January, provides that the Secretary-General will submit a report to the Council by 17 March.

Côte d'Ivoire

During informal consultations on 28 January, the Secretary-General briefed members of the Council on the situation in Côte d'Ivoire and the outcome of the Linas-Marcoussis round table and of the Conference of Heads of State in which he participated on 25 and 26 January. The agreement signed by the political factions of Côte d'Ivoire provides for the creation of a government of national reconciliation, of which the Secretary-General recalled the main tasks.

The Secretary-General emphasized that the value of this agreement depends entirely on the extent to which it is faithfully implemented. Since the beginning of the crisis, the United Nations has expressed support for the efforts made by ECOWAS to find a solution and will continue to try to build a lasting peace. The United Nations was currently providing humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons and refugees. Reports of human rights abuses were being looked into and ways to address the socio-economic impact of the conflict on the West Africa subregion as a whole were being examined.

The Linas-Marcoussis agreement provides for the establishment of a follow-up Committee which will be chaired by the United Nations. The Secretary-General informed the Council of his intention to appoint a Special Representative for Côte d'Ivoire. He stressed that he intended to study the proposals by the Heads of State in the communiqué of 26 January and the tasks that the Linas-Marcoussis agreement asks the United Nations to perform. The Secretary-General said that it would be his intention to submit soon to the Council a comprehensive report containing his recommendations on a further role of the United Nations in Côte d'Ivoire. He would send a technical multidisciplinary assessment team to Côte d'Ivoire to obtain the necessary information on the ground.

The members of the Council supported the proposals made by the Secretary-General and stated their intention to consider his recommendations promptly. They wanted to send a strong signal to the parties in Côte d'Ivoire, urging them to implement constructively and without delay the signed agreements and to avoid further violence.

The members of the Council welcomed the support of ECOWAS for the restoration of peace and security in Côte d'Ivoire and expressed the wish that the United Nations would support the implementation of the peace process. They underlined the negative effect that continuing violence might have on the entire subregion.

At the end of the consultations, the President was authorized to express the views of Council members to the press (see appendix).

Burundi

The Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Tuliameni Kalomoh, briefed Council members, at a private meeting on 30 January, on developments in Burundi since December 2002 and the signature of the ceasefire agreement between the transitional Government and CNDD-FDD, Pierre Nkurunziza wing.

Efforts to consolidate that agreement culminated in the signing, on 25 January, of a memorandum of understanding with the two rebel groups, CNDD-FDD (Jean-Bosco Ndayikengurukiye) and PALIPEHUTU-FNL. This positive development was followed by a meeting between President Buyoya and the CNDD-FDD leader in Pretoria on 26 and 27 January and the signing of a joint declaration which provides for the establishment of a Joint Ceasefire Commission and deployment of an African Union Military Observer Mission. The Deputy President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, visited Burundi recently and advised the parties that, following a meeting of the African Union in Addis Ababa, a group of observers would be sent soon. The Secretariat confirmed that that group would include 35 military observers from Burkina Faso, Gabon, Togo and Tunisia, and would be deployed in Bujumbura very quickly.

Concerning the establishment of the African mission, many practical questions remained, such as the financing of the mission and the coordination of the troop contributors (Ethiopia, Mozambique, South Africa). Key questions were to be addressed, such as the definition of the modalities of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and of the mandate of the mission.

The Assistant Secretary-General stressed that the United Nations increased role in guiding the peace process would be particularly crucial in the months ahead, before the deadline of 1 May. He announced the sending of four people to help with the technical planning of the African mission. The Secretary-General would also appoint the chairman of the Joint Ceasefire Commission. The international community should insist that the Burundian parties fulfil their obligation to advance the peace process.

The security situation remained calm, but recent fighting had resumed in Bubanza, Ruyigi and Gitega Provinces. The humanitarian situation was worrisome, some areas remaining inaccessible to the specialized agencies.

The members of the Council reiterated their support for the regional initiative, the South African facilitation and the African Union. They encouraged the parties to respect their commitments fully and to continue negotiations. They called for the donor community to continue to support the next phase of the process.

At the end of the consultations, the President expressed the views of Council members to the press (see appendix).

Asia

Afghanistan

On 31 January, the Council heard a public briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Lakhdar Brahimi. He gave a very detailed assessment of the situation in Afghanistan. He recalled the progress made during the first year of the Bonn process, while underlining that a clear plan of action, supported by the international community and setting out the main goals for 2003 was necessary in three main areas, namely, solidifying the key institutions of the State; pursuing national reconciliation; and showing tangible results on reconstruction projects.

According to the Special Representative, security was the main concern and it was not yet consolidated across the country. He gave an assessment of the ongoing reform of the judicial sector and the future elections. He spoke of the human rights question and the problems of relief, recovery and reconstruction of Afghanistan, calling upon the donor countries to fulfil the pledges made in Oslo. The situation of refugees and the return of 1-2 million displaced persons was a priority.

The members of the Council praised the Special Representative for the work accomplished and his engagement with this issue. They noted the progress made so far, but underlined the great challenges ahead, especially with regard to security.

United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

The Council members heard a briefing, during consultations on 22 January, by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Marie Guéhenno, on the latest report of the Secretary-General relating to the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). The Under-Secretary-General reported on the latest developments. The situation had remained generally calm in the past months, with the exception of some areas of tension, particularly a violent incident in December 2002 in the western sector and on 21 January 2003 in the Shab'a farms area. Tension remained between Lebanon and Israel over water at the Wazzani Springs on the Hasbani River. Violations by Israel of Lebanese airspace were continuing sporadically. Hizbollah continued to react to these overflights with anti-aircraft fire.

The Lebanese Joint Security Forces were more active in the areas vacated by Israel, but the Government of Lebanon continued to maintain the position that, so long as there was no comprehensive peace with Israel, the Lebanese armed forces would not be deployed along the Blue Line. Tension continued to prevail along the Line. The Secretariat therefore requested an extension of the mandate of UNIFIL for a further period of six months.

In their statements, the members of the Council expressed concern about the large number of minefields throughout the UNIFIL area of operation and hope that the humanitarian demining operations could be pursued.

The delegations which expressed views stressed that the relative calm in the area remained precarious, and that violations of the Blue Line by both sides could lead to an escalation of the tension. They supported the Secretary-General's appeal for moderation.

The members of the Council paid tribute to the UNIFIL operations and supported the recommendations of the Secretary-General that the Security Council extend the mandate of UNIFIL until 31 July 2003.

Following informal discussions, the Council adopted resolution 1461 (2003), by which it renewed the UNIFIL mandate for six months.

Iraq

On 9 January, the members of the Security Council heard a briefing, in informal consultations, by Hans Blix, Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Inspection and Verification Commission, and Mohammed ElBaradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency. That meeting, which followed the first comments made by Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei to the Council on 19 December 2002 on the Iraqi declaration, was part of the more frequent reporting to the Council on the resumption of inspections in Iraq after the adoption of resolution 1441 (2002).

Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei described to the Council the role and the results of the current inspections. They gave a further assessment of the Iraqi declaration. They described the expansion and consolidation of inspection activities in Iraq since 27 November 2002.

The members of the Council listened with the utmost attention and interest to the update of the assessment of Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei and reiterated full support for their work and actions and for the continuation of the inspection activities of UNMOVIC and IAEA pursuant to resolution 1441 (2002), in order to achieve the disarmament of Iraq.

After the consultations, the President made a statement to the press on behalf of the members of the Council (see appendix).

On 27 January, after the public report of Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei updating the implementation of the inspections conducted in accordance with resolution 1441 (2002) 60 days after they started, the members of the Council held informal consultations. That meeting was the opportunity for delegations to express preliminary observations and to put questions to Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei. The members of the Council said they would request the views of their capitals on the report and would hold consultations, as scheduled, on 29 January.

The members of the Security Council resumed, on that day, their discussions on the report presented on 27 January by Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei, who responded to several questions asked by members during the previous consultations concerning specific points of their report.

The members of the Council expressed their reactions. For a few delegations, the information provided by UNMOVIC and IAEA confirmed that Iraq was not fulfilling its obligations under resolution 1441 (2002) and was not showing active cooperation. Those delegations were of the view that, sooner or later, the Council would have to face its responsibilities if Iraq continued to refuse to cooperate actively. For others, even if uncertainties and doubts continued on many unresolved issues raised in the UNMOVIC report, inspections had already produced first results and had to be pursued in order to achieve the complete disarmament of Iraq. More time was to be given to the inspectors to allow them to fulfil their mission fully and urge Iraq to show more cooperation. Some delegations welcomed the announced coming to the Council of Secretary of State Colin Powell, to share information held by the United States Government.

Middle East, including the question of Palestine

On 16 January, after a public briefing by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Kieran Prendergast, the members of the Council exchanged views on the ongoing situation during private consultations.

The members of the Council deplored the continuation of violence on the ground, especially against civilians, including children, and the ever-worsening humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territories.

The Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom briefed delegations on the meeting held in London on 14 January on Palestinian reform, underlining that it was part of the process established by the road map, and that the meeting had been constructive.

Regarding the coming agenda, the Under-Secretary-General indicated that the next meeting of the Quartet at the Envoy level should be held by the beginning of February 2003 and be followed by a ministerial meeting. Furthermore, he stressed the importance of making headway in establishing a supervision mechanism for the implementation of the road map.

Europe

Georgia

During consultations on 21 January, the Council members heard a briefing by the Secretariat on the latest report regarding Abkhazia, Georgia.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Heidi Tagliavini, said that the situation on the ground remained quite calm but rather precarious. UNOMIG was continuing its efforts at improving overall security conditions, particularly in the Gali district. This should create a safer and friendlier environment for persons wanting to return to the area and for the Mission's personnel.

The Special Representative confirmed that UNOMIG would do its best to obtain implementation of the recommendations of the Joint Assessment Mission, including the opening in Gali of a branch of the Human Rights Office based in Sukhumi. UNOMIG was fully aware of the fact that improvements in the Gali district, even if they did occur, were no substitute for a political understanding on the return of refugees, still pending.

The Mission would continue its efforts to reactivate the Georgian-Abkhaz dialogue within the framework of the Coordinating Council, which, inter alia, would permit a decision on convening another conference on confidence-building measures.

The Special Representative emphasized that the determination of the political status of Abkhazia was a core issue of the peace process and that her focus would remain on bringing about substantial negotiations between the Abkhaz and Georgian sides, based on the Boden document. She believed that a high-level meeting of the Group of Friends under the auspices of the United Nations would create a convenient forum for discussion. In addition, a special assessment mission of the United Nations in the Kodori Valley, which was supported by many delegations in the Council, was in preparation and could be carried out in spring 2003.

Members of the Council again supported the idea of a high-level meeting of the Group of Friends and encouraged the two sides to enhance the mechanisms in order to ease tensions. They expressed the hope that the Georgian side would agree on renewing the mandate of the CIS forces, which had expired at the end of December 2002.

The Council adopted resolution 1462 (2003), by which it renewed the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Georgia for six months.

Thematic issues

Combating terrorism

On 20 January, the Security Council held a public meeting at ministerial level, at which it underlined the necessity for the international community to continue better combating terrorism. The debate provided an opportunity to recall United Nations action in that regard — in particular the work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee — and to underline the will of members of the Council to give a new impetus to the fight against that scourge.

At the end of the ministerial meeting, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 1456 (2003), to which is attached a declaration on the issue on combating terrorism, in which it invited the Secretary-General to submit a report within a month summarizing any proposals made during the 20 January debate.

Children and armed conflict

On 14 January, the Council held a public meeting on the issue of children and armed conflict. The Secretary-General introduced the debate, stressing that, despite progress accomplished in setting up an international legal framework, children continued to be the victims of conflict and that a control should be imposed on parties that violated the norms of international law. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Olara Otunnu, presented his report and advised the international community to begin taking concrete measures. The Executive Director of UNICEF, Carol Bellamy, called upon States Members of the United Nations to fight impunity and improve training.

Following the debate, which was attended by many delegations, the Council on 30 January adopted resolution 1460 (2003) in which it requested the Secretary-

General, in his next report, to give an assessment of all worrisome situations with regard to the protection of children and expressed its intention to consider taking appropriate steps to further address this issue if it deemed that insufficient progress was made.

Sanctions

At the beginning of the month of January and following consultations among members, the Security Council reached agreement on the composition of the sanctions committees for the year 2003 (see the note by the President in S/2003/10).

On 15 January, members of the Council considered a draft resolution concerning sanctions against the Taliban and al-Qa`idah, which were to be renewed on 19 January. According to resolution 1390 (2002), these sanctions were to be continued or to be improved 12 months after its adoption.

On 17 January, the Council adopted resolution 1455 (2003) which provides for an improvement of the efficiency of the sanctions regime, in particular by giving greater means to the Monitoring Group.

Kimberley Process

On 28 January, the Council adopted resolution 1459 (2003), on the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme for rough diamonds.

Appendix

Statements to the press made by the President of the Security Council in January 2003

Situation in Ethiopia and Eritrea (7 January)

The members of the Security Council heard a briefing from the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Hédi Annabi, on the situation in Ethiopia and Eritrea during informal consultations on 7 January. The Assistant Secretary-General introduced the progress report of the Secretary-General of 20 December 2002 (S/2002/1393) and updated the Council on developments since its issuance.

The members of the Council welcomed the progress made since the Secretary-General's report of 30 August 2002 (S/2002/977). They urged both Ethiopia and Eritrea to continue to extend to UNMEE and the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission their full cooperation in order to ensure the smooth demarcation of the border. In this regard, members of the Council welcomed the seventh report of the Boundary Commission, in particular the schedule for demarcation. Members of the Council further urged the two sides to engage in discussions with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, to address any issues that might arise during the demarcation process in order to reach agreement on their resolution.

The members of the Council welcomed the release by Ethiopia of all remaining Eritrean prisoners of war on 29 November 2002 under the auspices of ICRC, as Eritrea did for the Ethiopian prisoners. They called on both parties to resolve all other outstanding issues, including the establishment of a direct high-altitude air corridor between the two capitals.

The members of the Council expressed concern about the likely shortfall in the Trust Fund for the Delimitation and Demarcation of the Border once demarcation begins. They called on the international community to contribute urgently to the Trust Fund in order to facilitate the conclusion of the demarcation process in accordance with the Boundary Commission's schedule.

The members of the Council expressed further concern about the looming drought in Ethiopia and Eritrea and the implications this could have for the peace process. Members of the Council supported the appeal by the Secretary-General to Member States to provide prompt and generous support for humanitarian operations in Ethiopia and Eritrea through the consolidated appeals process and other mechanisms.

The members of the Council expressed their strong support for the Special Representative, the military and civilian personnel of UNMEE and the Boundary Commission for their work in support of the peace progress. They welcomed the new Force Commander for UNMEE, Major General Robert Gordon, and expressed appreciation to Major General Patrick Cammaert, who served as Force Commander for the last two years.

Central African Republic (8 January)

The members of the Security Council heard a briefing by the Representative of the Secretary-General in the Central African Republic, General Lamine Cissé. They reiterated their total support for his work as head of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic in the current difficult circumstances.

The members of the Council recalled their opposition to any attempt to seize power by force. They noted with satisfaction President Patassé's appeal for a national dialogue in his statement of 25 November and welcomed the recent establishment of the national dialogue coordination committee. They also welcomed the tabling of a bill on freedom of the press. They encouraged the Central African authorities to create the conditions for a comprehensive and all-inclusive dialogue. They requested the Secretary-General to continue providing support and assistance in this area.

The members of the Council welcomed the ongoing deployment of the CEMAC force under the leadership of Gabon, and with the logistical and financial support of France. They paid tribute to the members of CEMAC for their efforts. They called upon all Member States to provide financial or logistical support to the force.

The members of the Council noted with satisfaction the commitment made by Chad and the Central African Republic to implement fully and without delay all the provisions of the agreement signed in Libreville under the auspices of the President of Gabon, El Hadj Omar Bongo. They welcomed the decision by the two parties to convene without delay the Joint Commission in Libreville and urged them to use it to make substantial progress in their bilateral relations.

They expressed their continued interest in the human rights situation in the Central African Republic and also their support for the activities of BONUCA in this respect.

The members of the Security Council called upon the donor community to consider with solicitude the exceptional situation the Central African Republic is facing today.

Iraq (9 January)

The members of the Security Council met this morning to hear a briefing by the Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Inspection and Verification Commission Hans Blix, and the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohammed ElBaradei. They listened with the utmost attention and interest to the update of the assessment Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei had made of the Iraqi declaration and to their report on the progress of inspection activities in Iraq since they resumed on 27 November 2002.

The members of the Council reiterated their full support for the work and action of Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei and for the continuation of the inspection activities of UNMOVIC and IAEA pursuant to Council resolution 1441 (2002) in order to achieve the disarmament of Iraq.

Sierra Leone (10 January)

The members of the Council discussed the Secretary-General's latest report on UNAMSIL (S/2002/1417). They commended the Secretary-General and UNAMSIL for their role in maintaining peace in Sierra Leone and providing a platform for post-conflict reconstruction.

The members of the Council welcomed the progress made by UNAMSIL in its restructuring and the first two phases of its drawdown plans, and encouraged this to continue. They underlined the importance of the Government of Sierra Leone continuing to strengthen the army and police, including through adequate logistical and infrastructural support, so that they can soon assume full responsibility for security.

The members noted with concern the fact that government control was not yet fully re-established in some areas of the country, including the diamond-producing areas, and urged the Government of Sierra Leone to make rapid progress with this, including by adopting a policy for the diamond sector.

The members of the Council welcomed the news of progress with reintegration, and encouraged this to continue so that all ex-combatants will have received training by the end of 2003.

The Council welcomed the commencement of work by the Special Court and reiterated their full support for the Court and for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. These are important elements of the reconciliation process in Sierra Leone.

The members shared the Secretary-General's concerns about the regional security situation, stressed the need to find a solution to the conflicts in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, and encouraged the efforts undertaken by States engaged in helping to find such a solution.

The members of the Council expressed their willingness to visit Sierra Leone on the occasion of the next Security Council mission in the region.

Finally, the members of the Council reiterated the importance of relaunching the political dialogue among Mano River Union countries.

Democratic Republic of the Congo (15 January)

The members of the Council called on all Congolese parties to implement without delay the Pretoria Agreement of 17 December 2002, in order to establish a transitional government which should lead to elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They stressed the need for early action to resolve the key outstanding issues especially the question of security for all parties in Kinshasa and stressed the importance of adopting the Pretoria agreement in the framework of the inter-Congolese dialogue as soon as possible.

The members of the Council expressed their deep concern at the resumption of fighting in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the continuation of instability in the north-east of the country. They urged the parties to abide by the terms of the Gbadolite Agreement signed on 30 December 2002, and in particular to cease immediately all military activities in the area. They called for the swift

implementation of the Luanda Agreement and the establishment of the Ituri Pacification Commission without further delay.

The members of the Council condemned in the strongest terms the massacres and systematic violations of human rights perpetrated by MLC and RCD-National troops in the Ituri area. Jean-Pierre Bemba, as the leader of MLC, bears the responsibility for the security of civilian populations in the territory under his control. The members of the Council demanded that Jean-Pierre Bemba ensure that these massacres and violations of human rights cease immediately and hold the perpetrators accountable. They took note of his commitment to take action and expressed their intention to continue to monitor the situation in this regard, on the basis of continuing investigations by MONUC and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The members of the Council stressed the particular need for all parties claiming a role in the future of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to demonstrate their respect for human rights, international humanitarian law, and the security and well-being of civilian populations in areas under their control.

The members of the Council stressed the importance of full implementation by the Governments of both Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo of their commitments under the Pretoria Agreement of 30 July. They encouraged further efforts by MONUC and the Third Party Verification Mechanism to continue to verify implementation of those commitments, in particular the full withdrawal of Rwandan forces and the absence of all forms of support to the foreign armed groups by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The members of the Council expressed concern at reports of continuing sponsorship of proxy groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They called on both sides to cooperate fully with the verification efforts of MONUC and the Third Party Verification Mechanism.

Liberia (17 January)

The members of the Council heard a briefing by the Director of the Africa II Division of the Department of Political Affairs, and discussed the situation in Liberia.

The members of the Council expressed regret that the Government of Liberia had not responded to the proposals of the Secretary-General for a revised mandate for the United Nations Office in Liberia, and urged it to do so as soon as possible.

The members of the Council called on the Government of Liberia and LURD to work to bring the armed conflict to an end through dialogue and to create the security conditions necessary for inclusive, peaceful and free legislative and presidential elections, including a ceasefire to guarantee safety for all. In this respect, they welcomed the outcome of the first meeting of the International Contact Group, held in Dakar on 19 December 2002. They expressed their concern regarding human rights in the country and called upon the Government of Liberia and LURD to ensure that humanitarian aid workers were allowed free access to displaced civilians and refugees.

The members of the Council called on the Government of Liberia to create the conditions for free, fair and transparent legislative and presidential elections, and to allow international observers to monitor the electoral process.

The members of the Council called on the Government of Liberia to commit itself to building peace in the region, including through full compliance with relevant Security Council resolutions and full restoration and normalization of its relations with its neighbours and the international community.

Western Sahara (23 January)

The members of the Council welcomed the Secretary-General's report of 16 January 2003 concerning Western Sahara and agreed with his observation that the responsibility for a solution rested solely with the parties.

Council members recalled the need to release without further delay all remaining prisoners of war in compliance with international humanitarian law and urged full compliance, as established under paragraph 5 of resolution 1429 (2002).

They also recalled that in that same resolution the Council had called upon Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO to continue to cooperate with the efforts of ICRC to resolve the problem of the fate of all those unaccounted for since the beginning of the conflict.

The members of the Council also expressed concern that, despite the tireless efforts of the Secretary-General's Special Representative and UNHCR, confidence-building measures remained stalled, and called on the parties to make the necessary compromises to allow person-to-person contact between Saharans on both sides of the berm.

Council members joined the Secretary-General in his appeal to donors to provide the necessary resources to WFP and UNHCR to cover the food requirements of refugees.

The members of the Council agreed to extend the mandate of MINURSO to give the parties time to consider the proposal presented to them by the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, James Baker III.

Côte d'Ivoire (28 January)

The members of the Security Council were informed by the Secretary-General of the Agreement signed by the round table meeting of the political factions in Côte d'Ivoire, held at Linas-Marcoussis from 15 to 23 January, and of the Conference of Heads of State on Côte d'Ivoire, which was held at Paris on 25 and 26 January and approved the Agreement. They expressed satisfaction that the parties had reached an agreement and urged them to implement it constructively without delay and to avoid further violence.

The members of the Council stressed once again the importance of the support of the members of the Economic Community of West African States to the restoration of peace and security in Côte d'Ivoire. They welcomed the continued efforts to deploy the ECOWAS Monitoring Group force, under Senegalese command. They expressed their appreciation to all member countries of ECOWAS that had agreed to provide contingents to the force and appealed to the international community to lend its support. They also expressed appreciation for the efforts of the African Union to bring about a settlement.

The members of the Council thanked France for its diplomatic efforts and military deployment aimed at facilitating a political settlement of the crisis.

The members of the Council thanked the Secretary-General for the important role that he had played in the talks, either directly or through the intermediary of his Special Representative. They expressed the wish that the United Nations would support the implementation of the peace process. They stated their intention to consider promptly the Secretary-General's recommendations to that end.

Burundi (30 January)

The members of the Council welcomed the signing, on 25 and 27 January respectively, of the memorandum of understanding between the Transitional Government and CNDD/FDD (Alain Mugabarabona) and PALIPEHUTU/FNL (Jean-Bosco Ndayikengurukiye) and the Joint Declaration with CNDD-FDD (Pierre-Nkurunziza), and the decision of Jean-Bosco Ndayikengurukiye and Alain Mugabarabona to return to Burundi on 10 February and to start cantonment of their troops in mid-February.

The members of the Council reiterated support for the regional initiative, the South African facilitation and the African Union.

The members of the Council commended the Central Organ of the African Union for its endorsement of deployment of a team of observers immediately followed by the African mission, and called upon the international donor community to provide the necessary resources.

The members of the Council expressed appreciation to countries that have announced their readiness to send observers and to contribute troops to the African mission.

The members of the Council encouraged the parties to respect fully all the commitments they have undertaken and stressed the importance for all parties to fulfil their obligations regarding the transition scheduled for next May. In this regard, they urged the parties to the joint declaration to refrain from military action, to stop recruitment of fighters and to continue negotiations.

The members of the Council urged the leaders of the belligerent parties to reach an understanding on major outstanding issues for implementing the ceasefire agreements.

The members of the Council demanded that PALIPEHUTU-FNL (Agathon Rwasa) immediately cease hostilities and join the peace process with a view to negotiating a ceasefire agreement without further delay.

The members of the Council urged the leaders of the signatory parties to take urgent steps towards reform of the security sector and to provide the information necessary to determine modalities for a process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

The members of the Council called on all Burundian parties recruiting or using child soldiers in violation of their international obligations to immediately halt such recruitment or use of children.

The members of the Council commended the efforts of the donor community, in particular the European Union, for their contribution to the peace process and called for their continued financial, material and logistical support for the next phase of the process.